

Sweeney F. [The Chattel Record: Visualizing the Archive in Diasporan Art](#). In: Hannah Durkin and Celeste-Marie Bernier, ed. *Visualizing Slavery: Art Across the Black Diaspora*. Liverpool, UK: Liverpool University Press, 2016, pp.81-103.

**Copyright:**

Permission has been granted by the publisher to include this chapter in the repository

**Link to book:**

<http://liverpooluniversitypress.co.uk/products/61121>

**Date deposited:**

12/01/2017

**Embargo release date:**

10 March 2018



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 3.0 Unported License](#)

## **The chattel record: Visualizing the archive in diasporan art**

African art has two aspects . . . It has an aesthetic meaning and a cultural significance. What it is as a thing of beauty ranges it with the absolute standards of art . . . . ; what it is as an expression of African life and thought makes it an equally previous cultural document . . . . the cornerstone of a new and more universal aesthetic. . . . Our museums were full of . . . this material before we began to realise its art significance. Dumb dusty trophies of imperialism . . . assembled from the colonially exploited corners of Africa . . . . Then suddenly there came . . . . a realization that here was an art object intrinsically interesting and fine.'

Alain Locke, 'A note on African art', (1924).<sup>1</sup>

'The modern artist . . . was always working with the idea of authorship. The native African sculptor, forgetful of self and fully projected into the idea, was always working in a complete fusion with the art object.' Alain Locke, 'African Art: Classic Style', (1925).<sup>2</sup>

By some strange neglect, *one* of the truest, manliest, and bravest of [Virginia's] children,--one who, in after years, will . . . command the pen of genius to set his merits forth, . . . lives now only in the chattel records of his native State.

Frederick Douglass, *The Heroic Slave*, (1854).<sup>3</sup>

## **The chattel record**

In 1854, Frederick Douglass pointed in the opening frame of his novella, *The Heroic Slave* to the failures of historical consciousness produced by Southern cultures of enslavement. Fusing, as William Andrews shows, fictional and factual discourse in order to generate a platform from which the African-American narrative voice could self-authorize,<sup>4</sup> the story of Madison Washington, the heroic slave of the title, also exemplifies that 'special case in literature' that is historical fiction: a "'mode of writing" José de Piérola argues, that 'creates and sustains an unresolved tension between history and fiction.'<sup>5</sup> Like the hero of the

work - enslaved in Virginia, escaped, recaptured and eventually finding freedom in the British Caribbean following a rebellion led by Washington on board the brigantine *Creole* in 1841 - the novella operates on ‘the edge of history,’ producing a double-edged critique that lays as much emphasis on history as a mechanism of exclusion as on the specific historical distortions and absences that lend the work its thematic force. Its opening sentences position Southern slaveholding states as counter-revolutionary agents whose support for the material and cultural economy of slavery de-authenticated the conditions of freedom at the heart of the national democratic project. As significantly, it suggests that genealogies of revolutionary heroism are being deliberately disremembered to the detriment of a national historical consciousness founded on a belief in liberty and made possible by revolutionary agency.

Black heroism and rebellion provide a critical juncture therefore through which history’s exclusive narrative may be re-entered and black political sovereignty confirmed through creative mobilization of the fictive act/art. Resistant to attempts to deny the subjectivity of African Americans and fully cognisant of the ways in which slavery sought to exclude evidence of enslaved agency from the domain of public history – the bar on literacy providing a case in point – Douglass’ framing narrative points to the significance of the growing body of prohibited historical knowledge nonetheless being generated by ongoing acts of emancipatory radicalism that confirmed the self-sovereignty of enslaved, fugitive or emancipated persons. The use of Washington’s story to exemplify this point fuses strategies of fictional, historical and visual representation,<sup>6</sup> producing a model of literary memory that points to the visionary sources accessed by Douglass’ ‘pen of genius’: the historical and imaginative capital contained in what he terms ‘the chattel records.’ Like Washington, visible only in ‘the quivering flash of angry lightning, [before] . . . he again disappears covered with mystery,’<sup>7</sup> these ‘chattel records’ are the briefly glimpsed archival heart of an

alternative narrative in which the struggle for liberty is based on a conscious awareness of the revolutionary presence of black self-emancipation.

‘Self-consciousness’, writes Pierre Nora, ‘emerges under the sign of that which has already happened,’ noting that in an era of profound historical sensibility we have come to ‘speak so much of memory because there is so little of it left.’<sup>8</sup> In Nora’s formulation, consciousness arises against an epistemology of progress, one determined by the death of prior models of subjectivity and existence. The prospect of loss, of an historical sense of self in potential forfeit, is therefore what impels historical and cultural acts of memory. At a time when black history remained largely unwritten, *The Heroic Slave* confirms that in unveiling the forbidden sites and sights of slavery, the artist as much as the historian is wanted. More radically, Douglass imagines the ‘chattel records’ as the sign of black self-consciousness and the source of future memory because they materially evidence that which has happened, and therefore empirically confirm that which is politically true. At a time in which, as Debra Willis and Barbara Krauthamer put it, ‘mastery included the power to make and command images,’<sup>9</sup> these ‘chattel records’, shadows of imposed subjection and the map of black historical consciousness, provide simultaneously the uncharted terrain of future creative fieldwork, and identify and recuperate acts of emancipatory self-mastery within an encoded but still legible lexicon of the present.

In this formulation, the chattel record can be characterized as a thing apart, its co-existence with the structures of power that produce it positioning it in supplementary relation to master narratives of historical agency, legal subjectivity, and creative capacity. This supplementary possibility is key to locating the emergence of historical consciousness, for it complicates normative antebellum racial understandings of subjectivity and sovereignty by evidencing both. The frontispiece portraits included in the work of enslaved or formerly enslaved African American writers, for example, perform the subjectivity of the sitter for a would-be readership. Illustrating the ways in which creative

sovereignty is exercised in the production and subsequent archiving of images in the pages of a book, they situate themselves as part of the history and philosophy of knowledge about slavery, which, by virtue of its authorship, constitutes part of the chattel record. Because it is produced through self-consciousness engagement with history, the supplementarity character of the chattel record also underwrites the significance of the producer of visual and textual material and materiality in ensuring the public life and memorial possibilities of the aesthetic act in the landscapes of the present. Rather than supporting the idea of an archive as, to draw on Derrida, a ‘storehouse’, a site of memory that is defined, locatable and fixed, the chattel record in Douglass’ hands is imagined as an obscured counter-archive to which official practices and discursive acts are uncomfortably tethered. If concealment, which obscures histories of enslavement from view is also, in different ways, as Joan Schwartz and Terry Cooke argue, a constituent feature of legitimated archives, whose ‘records and processes . . . remain almost invisible, an unquestioned and transparent conduit through which . . . [to] approach or receive the past’,<sup>10</sup> the supplementary presence of the chattel record requires those processes, records and the ways in which they are chosen, shaped and privileged, to be brought into plain view, in ways that clarify archival performance as a manifestation of political and social insurgence as well as of power.

Present, veiled, supplementary, performative, insurgent: the chattel record is designated by Douglass in the antebellum moment as a repository of agency and fugitive knowledge, one that prefigures and makes possible the aesthetic act. In effect it performs as, to borrow a term used by Leigh Raiford,<sup>11</sup> a shadow archive whose multiple destabilisations of the culturally and politically familiar repeatedly frustrate the attempts of dominant histories to authorize their implied universality. To turn this around, the official record, built on the substratum of unaccountability in which the shadow archive is housed, is unable fully, to adopt Derrida’s observation, to reaffirm its role as a legitimate ‘shelter [for] . . . the memory of . . . [commencement (origin) and commandment (law)]’; or, as

significantly, to try to shelter itself from the ‘memory it shelters’.<sup>12</sup> Arguably the chattel records make this form of double bluff all but impossible because their existence demystifies the methodology of subjection, simultaneously chronicling scenes, acts and symbols of dissent that confirm the personal sovereignty, self-mastery and self-emancipatory drive of the enslaved body in and of the shadow archive. Additionally, the creative act is inevitably a moment of archival intervention, one at which privileged access to the restricted spaces of fugitive knowledge is made available; for any archaeology of the chattel records blurs the lines between the artist and archivist, between the roles of guardian and of promethean actor, tracing a creative continuum in which art emerges from before subsequently resubmitting itself to its archival source.

As the resurrection of Washington illustrates, and the many instances of frontispiece portraits framing nineteenth-century autobiographical narratives testify, archival insurgence frequently marks the beginning of representation. It is also the moment at which the shadow archive passes out of spheres of institutional constraint into the public domain of creative endeavour, in performances of fugitive memory that open new intellectual and aesthetic space. As significantly, I would like to suggest, every performance that draws creatively on the chattel record reproduces and refines for contemporary consumption those entries in the shadow archive of slavery on which it draws. This deliberate replacement of individual acts of artistry on the record positions the archive as not just a body of reference but as operating a methodology of cumulative aesthetics. In Douglass’ (and later Locke’s) observations, the moment of artistic possibility therefore arises when authority in and over the archive is couched as an aesthetic performance of interpretation and disclosure. As a result, aesthetic performance, inevitably an expression of creative self-mastery, is equally a process of archival expansion that sanctions the historical consciousness of the present tense of its enactment.

For the African-American visual artist, the shadow archive has proven a significant aesthetic resource. As Celeste-Marie Bernier has shown, the artistry, activism and symbolic significance of individuals who, in defiance of ‘the limitations imposed by their own fallible mortality . . . remained . . . committed to playing a key role in the formation – as well as the perpetuation – of a complex continuum of black male and female resistance,’ stand in stark opposition to, and present radical departures from, white official archives.<sup>13</sup> The scope and richness of Bernier’s work are impossible to deal with in any detail here. However, those figures who form the focus of her study – Sojourner Truth, Frederick Douglass, Toussaint Louverture, Harriet Tubman, Nat Turner and Sengbe Pieh – are as she demonstrates significant not only because they challenge dominant histories of slavery, abolition and their representative apparatuses, but because the technologies of self-emancipation they helped pioneer included laying down an alternative visual and textual archive that confirmed black subjectivity even as it often complicated the transnational politics of affect through the adoption of a radical activist aesthetic. The processes of ‘formation . . . [and] perpetuation’ she identifies as central to the mobility and political efficacy of that aesthetic confirm the subsequent instances of temporal extension and material supplementarity produced in the shadow archive on each representative occasion. In short, these individuals and many others reproduced themselves as artefacts in signifying systems of radical memory deliberately laid down for and available to posterity, and their traces are not incidental by-products of those historical forces privileged in what otherwise remained a largely white-generated archive. So, while archival documents are often characterised as testimonials to historical action, the presence of the chattel record suggests that in black diasporic consciousness, the production of the shadow archive as a repository of African-American artistry early became a more transparently deliberate process. It involved a clear sense not only, as Nora suggests, of what had already happened, but equally of the present tense of historical consciousness as an ongoing site of responsibility, one

charged with recognising contemporary vulnerabilities and aspiring to a radically transformed future. In the context of this futurist vision, each reopening of the archive signals not just the beginning of a process of reinterpretation (to draw on Derrida's assertion that the archive once opened can never be closed), but also a point of creative origin – of ongoing artefactual placement that contradicts the disciplinary adage that while one can put records into evidence, one cannot set out to put evidence into records.

If Douglass' comments fashion a model of archival artistry that is both representative of the black subject as an artefact of slavery and a deliberate figuration of an activist aesthetic clear about its role in placing evidence of a visionary emancipatory drive on record, then Alain Locke's twentieth-century assessment of the materiality of the white-curated museum carries related theoretical cargo. A significant figure in the development of institutional and artistic culture in the United States, Locke's philosophical interventions into the debate around black aesthetics, his *New Negro* anthology and wider role in promoting African-American literary and visual arts, are matched by his role as a collector and curator of black diasporan, including African art. Indeed Jeremy Braddock identifies Locke's collecting practice (amongst others') as a critical influence on modernism's institutionalization.<sup>14</sup> The specifics of that collecting practice provide an instance of archival intervention, as well as of the imaginary narrative of curatorial performance, with the historical objects in the collection gesturing beyond their material and aesthetic immediacy to the geographical and cultural hinterlands of their production. While Locke's interest in shaping the social meaning of art rejected any suggestion that art should be used as 'propaganda' – that is to say to carry a didactically fashioned political message, his collection of African art proved influential in provoking African-American visual and literary artists to reflect on their aesthetic relationship with Africa as well as on the expressive potential of co-opting the formal vocabulary of African art into their own work.<sup>15</sup> Notably, Braddock identifies the art collection as a



culturally productive object and an aesthetic form in and of itself. Locke's awareness of the ways in which earlier anthropological or museological collections represented a failure to achieve that form is clear in his 1924 commentary on the value of African art, which notes the limitations of nineteenth-century institutional displays of mastery unconscious of the artistry of the artefacts they placed in archival play. Equally, however, he recognises the value of these imperial spectacles as productive of a significant contemporary archival and aesthetic resource – of their potential to provide a transformative aesthetic grammar to the black diasporan artist.

The black modernity defined in Locke's New Negro idealism is marked by the redesignation of the museum as a previously 'unseen' storehouse of artistry. The 'new and more universal aesthetic' to which he refers, therefore, is not one grounded in a rejection of jaded forms incompatible with the upheavals characterising the human experience of the twentieth century. Rather it involves aesthetic re-evaluation of those objects of western containment, the 'dumb dusty trophies' populating the restrained and constraining spaces of the western cultural archive. Freed from the centralized authority of the museum, the ethnographic space of their cultural estrangement and aesthetic alienation, they become 'art objects intrinsically interesting and fine.' In doing so they confront artist and viewer with new ethical and political responsibilities of archival interpretation.<sup>16</sup>

Locke's afromodernist model places the archive centre stage in much the same way as Douglass did seventy years before, though the constitution and remit of that archive has shifted significant ground. In 1854, the political imperative for freedom clarified as nothing else could the need to recall and produce radical acts of emancipatory heroism that challenged slavery's repressive grip. By 1924, the focus of aesthetic politics had changed in response to new and emerging social conditions and an emphasis on the 'race question'. Additionally, the intra-diasporic viewing points afforded by the new mobility of the twentieth century transformed the relationship between artefact and art object just as it facilitated

the emergence of major centres of black diasporan art outside the United States.<sup>17</sup> For Locke, the unhomely presence of ethnographic objects in white spaces of cultural authority confirms the aesthetic as well as human realities of the diasporan archive and its relationship to the chattel records. Additionally, the authority of the collector as visionary confers aesthetic legitimacy on the contemporary critical moment in which the three-dimensional African artefact takes form as an archival reality for diasporan artistry as an ‘equally previous cultural document.’ In doing so it invokes the origins of that aesthetic quickening in the conscription of Africa and the enslavement of Africans. Arguably the temporal and geographical structures of black diasporan modernism meant that it would in any case be difficult to consign African art to the domain of the primitive – to prehistory rather than to memory. Nonetheless, the formal attributes of African art are provenanced in their ethnographic burden: the historical meaning they carry because of their inevitable recall of the Atlantic passage.

Later, (1925), Locke rehabilitates the ethnographic aesthetic, subduing spectres of Middle Passage by reaching for a paradigm of artefactual embodiment ritualized through the act of creation as a way of mystifying black artistry as difference. In this model, conventional acts of artistry are structured around a subject-object relation – cast almost as an act of conjure – that remains intact during the process of making and is confirmed on its completion. The contrapuntal Africanist aesthetic Locke describes involves the presence of the artist as creative force within the art object, an imaginary encryption that disassembles the subject-object, maker-made relation. Black diasporan art is therefore fashioned not through acts of imposition, but through a process of purposeful union between subject and artistic objective. This permits a transfer of power and a migration of meaning that blurs the distinction between artist and art object, in ways subsequently inflecting the acts of spectatorship the artwork is intended to produce and to encounter. As significantly, it undercuts western

notions of authorship as the engine necessary of the creative act and of mastery as its structural precursor.

The ‘discovery’ of art-objects in the white-generated archive then is a moment of revelation that destabilises the historical narrative underpinning the display of ethnographic objects in one of its most important theatres - the western museum. Recognition of the aesthetic significance of the artefact, previously stripped of its ritual function and signifying not the intentions of its community of makers but the failures of western critical spectatorship, underscores the misguided drive to accumulation, objectification and display that preceded its archival incarceration. As evidentiary markers of untold tales: mimetic narratives of colonial violence and transatlantic slavery; radical documentaries of dislocation, historical alienation and cultural disorientation, therefore, these artefacts testify to the possibility of acts of reading nuanced by an understanding of the ubiquitous violence and historical cuts that accompanied the creation of the chattel record, as well as the absences that characterise it as an archival resource.

Seventy years previously, Douglass noted the archival problematic slavery posed to the black artist in the opening to his novella, linking the artefactual confinement of the African American in/as chattel record to the challenge faced by the artist as archivist. Locke’s comments suggest one of the complex ways in which the post-slavery diasporan archive articulates and incorporates its human and artistic referents. Fundamentally, he questions the relationship between the artist, the act of artistry and the art object in the post-slavery context, suggesting a primary association between the African-American body as an artefact of slavery and the artist’s role in maintaining and sustaining an archive of memory in ways that transform, memorialize, mourn and regenerate that artefact as a work of art. In the antebellum period, the chattel record is ambivalently figured: although mirroring enslavement as a form of historical death for those consigned to it, it nonetheless shows its potential as a shadow archive, a primary source for an emerging radical activist aesthetic.<sup>18</sup> Locke’s post-slavery, post-reconstruction

position reflects related concerns, but is also able to engage actively with the production of archival sources through modern collecting practices and by providing a related critique of archival performance as part of a process of aesthetic institutionalisation and social regeneration. Just as Douglass resurrects the forgotten Washington from the living death of the chattel record in the living word of the fictive idiom, Locke sees in the African artwork the evidence of an aesthetic tradition that can be recovered from the archive in ways that allow the diasporic viewing points of the modern to envision a changed future. Both figure the shadow archive as a political theatre in which historical scripts and evidentiary artefacts are subject to ongoing revision and continuous regeneration. Confronted with interrelated transnational legacies of commodification, they each establish continuums of archival practice that explore how radical example may be represented - through archival reencounter, visual and narrative liberation from the prescriptions of subjection, no less than as an articulation of a black diasporan emancipatory aesthetic. If the shadow archive is produced through chains of material evidence that naturalise the landscape of the present as an anticipatory ground for a radical future, Douglass and Locke occupy an intellectual position that recognises the revolutionary curatorial and creative possibilities of the collection of provenanced artefacts and unauthorised art objects that have been hidden in plain sight.

### **Eldzier Cortor's *Southern Gate*: Return to the scene of subjection**

If 'Each body has its art'<sup>19</sup> as Gwendolyn Brooks wrote, then what challenges attend the production and deciphering of modernist representations of the black body as social document and oppositional object, or as Caroline Brown puts it, as 'both map and mirage'<sup>20</sup> of its historical foundations and contemporary ambition? I would like to draw on the suggestive force of Douglass' and Locke's identification and of an available archive of cultural documents, chattel records,

things of beauty, and objects of resistance as a means of exploring some of the uses to which the chattel record has been put in afromodernist returns to sites and sights of slavery in the twentieth century. Specifically I would like to consider the ways in which one particular act of artistry, Eldzier Cortor's *Southern Gate*, [Figure 1] revisits the archival body, reworking the image of the enslaved body in the archive, and producing a cumulative aesthetic whose self-conscious methodology undertakes simultaneously to re-catalogue, to curate and to remember the substance and shadow of the diasporan repository.

Afromodernist artistry as a creative curatorial act turns on the material realities of post-slavery contexts of artistic production. The ending of slavery and black emancipation around the Atlantic was achieved at different times, as the result of many kinds of emancipatory activity in different national, historical, cultural and imperial contexts. Civil war, marroonage, political and religious activism, artistic insurgency and good old fashioned economics were just some of the movers in bringing about the an end to institutionalized systems of racial oppression and unfreedom. Marking the transition from slavery to freedom, from subjection to personal sovereignty, black emancipation constitutes one of the most significant transformations in eighteenth and nineteenth-century Atlantic history. Inevitably freedom altered the emphasis of the politics of representation, with concurrent implications for the post-slavery work of art and its relationship with the chattel record. Models of literal and representative repression born of slavery and racial discrimination of course remained largely intact. But emancipation arguably marks the emergence of a new imperative for AfroAtlantic peoples: the achievement of political independence, full citizenship, civil rights, representative emancipation, and the pursuit of a wide-ranging equalities agenda.

The context of post-emancipation therefore prompts particular questions around the performative potential and regenerative processes of the shadow archive of slavery no less than concerning its moral cargo. What are the politics

of access, reproduction and performance of the chattel record? What do artists as archivists draw from and return to national and transnational repositories, and why?

These questions take on a particular cast when directed towards twentieth-century diasporan portraiture that returns to representations of the subject in subjection. Afrodiasporan art, and portraiture in particular, is inescapably confronted with the problem of the body as the site of captivity. Inevitably, post-emancipation representations of slavery must return to a time before the current paradigm of - at least in civil and legal terms - freedom. Eldzier Cortor's *Southern Gate* (1942-'43) provides a strategic example of the ways in which the archival play of contemporary artistry can be used to innovative effect in placing pressure not only on white-generated codes of representation, but on African-American aesthetic responses to those codes that may unintentionally produce reactive forms of symbolic indenture. An early instance of his emphatic turn in the early 1940s to a focus on the black female form, the painting, and Cortor himself, came to national prominence when it was included in an article in *Life Magazine* in 1946, entitled 'Art: Negro Artists Win Top U.S. Honors', and reproducing images of work by Marion Perkins, Eldzier Cortor, Jacob Lawrence, William H. Johnson, Horace Pippin, Romare Bearden, John Wilson and Palmer Hayden.<sup>21</sup> The caption to Cortor's painting reads: "'Southern Gate' by Eldzier Cortor, 30, of Chicago who has won prizes at Chicago Art Institute. Here he painted a young Negro girl with a mockingbird on her shoulder against a background symbolizing the old South,"<sup>22</sup> fixing the work within a progressive framework of past and present in which the liberal space of *Life Magazine* maps national spaces onto temporally configured moral frameworks. The 'young Negro girl' of the American present implies the pastness of the 'old' South as a period in American history that history has moved beyond. The framework of presentation in 1946 therefore aligns itself with the United States' contemporary self-image as a beacon of liberal democracy following victory in the war against fascism in Europe, conscripting paintings and

sculptures of Negro artists interesting ‘not because they are done by Negroes but because they represent some the best work turned out by American artists today’<sup>23</sup> to a nationalist expression of an internationalist agenda. That Marion Perkins, Eldzier Cortor, Jacob Lawrence, William H. Johnson, Horace Pippin, Romare Bearden, John Wilson and Palmer Hayden were producing much of the best American art of the period is incontrovertible. Nonetheless, *Life*’s championing of African American artists at this moment might also be read as an attempt to sustain the propaganda of victory by constraining the expression of themes of historical oppression, economic marginalization and contemporary persecution as lived realities for African Americans, North and South, that inhabits much of their work.

Inevitably, Cortor’s painting is complicated by its relationship with the cultural landscape of the United States as a prefiguration of meaning or as it inflects readings of aesthetic form or value. As an act of portraiture, it steps out of the safely constrained spaces of genre, exceeding the bourgeois conventions of the form in its rejection of realist considerations of scale and its move away from the formal grammar of social subjectivity or consciously posed fictions of interiority. Instead, Cortor focuses on the female form as an aesthetic object able to signify, by virtue of its artefactual performance of temporal, formal and symbolic dissonance, an archival underworld that finds formal echo in the surrealist grammar of the subconscious that structures the piece. Provocatively contending that ‘the Black woman represents the Black race. She is the Black Spirit; she conveys a feeling of eternity and a continuance of life,’<sup>24</sup> Cortor was one of the first African-American artists to make African-American women his dominant theme.<sup>25</sup> As significantly in terms of deconstructing his archival intentions, he is one of only a handful of artists to treat the black nude or semi-nude female form in this or earlier periods.<sup>26</sup> Risking aesthetic as well as political and moral censure at a time when an anti-figurative aesthetic, abstract expressionism in particular, was gaining increasing traction in US and

international art worlds, and when an expressive propriety born of centuries of sexual exploitation in slavery and the symbolism of licentiousness as well as the sexual subjection that attended it made the black female nude at best a hazardous proposition for African American artists, *Southern Gate* operates within complicated visual lexica that layer the relationship between the black female form and the Southern landscape as a site and sight of slavery.

Incorporating an African sculptural aesthetic to the surreal illusionism of the canvas, the work, whose title is suggestive of incarceration and enclosure, also positions itself as a visual memory triggering a cycle of call and recall that brings a series of antecedent visual and textual images into proximate view. Those images present difficult ethical challenges to any attempt at aesthetic appraisal because of their stubborn insistence on the material suffering of the body as an intensively subjective experience often aggravated by the invasive violence of the image-making itself. Provocatively present, even if the performance of artistry negates them, are antecedent images of the unclothed or semi-clothed black subject, ranging from the schematic or individualized images of runaways on fugitive slave notices, to the iconography of abolitionism, Agassi's ethnographic photographs, and the photographic images of lynchings in wide circulation in the US throughout the preceding decades. Chronicles of the grim realities of African American vulnerability to unconstrained white violence, particularly in rural environments, as well as underlining the ways in which historical correlations between mastery and representation found contemporary expression in acts of ritual murder and in the memorial and evidentiary character of the photographic image that recorded them, these documents confirm the representative and political shadow cast by slavery into the twentieth century.

The painting therefore walks a fine line between complicity and condemnation, for it relies on an understanding of the past as present and symbolically embedded in a visual archive with roots in the chattel record. The most present of these is William Blake's engraving, 'Flagellation of a Female



Samboe Slave', one of the illustrations to John Gabriel Stedman's *Narrative, of a five years' expedition, against the revolted Negroes of Surinam ... Vol. I.* published in London in 1796.<sup>27</sup> [Figure 2] Dubbed 'humanitarian pornography' by Mario Klarer, the illustration is one of several visualizations of scenes of power and terror that inhabit Stedman's text. Noting the implicit sexual tenor of the image, the '[c]oded erotic attraction coupled with repulsive violence govern[ing] Blake's illustration of . . . torture,' Klarer identifies the pornographic and the sublime as 'two . . . dimensions that characterise the very scenes of slave abuse that are rightly considered the backbone of the *Narrative*.'<sup>28</sup>

Blake's figure is characteristically hypervisible, stretched across the vertical, the exaggerated linear perspective reducing the scale of the middle ground. The other figures, all of whom are male, appear tiny in comparison, suggesting a deliberate calibration of the relationship between representative scale and moral significance more typically found in earlier Christian religious art. Naked except for a now ragged and bloodied white cloth covering her hips, bleeding cuts scoring her body, the viewing proximity provides an equally intimate view of the woman's face as she gazes upwards. This gendered play on depictions of the final moments of the wounded Sebastian's submission to martyrdom illuminates again the representative as well as literal problems inherent even in sympathetic renditions of the subject, particularly the female subject in subjection. If the nude presents a figure clothed in art in ways that circumvent the conventional pieties of exposure, Blake presents public nakedness as confirmation of slavery's erasure of civil, legal, and personal boundaries, the invasive presence of the aestheticizing gaze complicit in even as it seeks to critique slavery's prohibition of black self-sovereignty in the most intimate domains of subjectivity, namely the immanent materiality of the body and the imperative of consciousness to protect it from physical harm. Hortense Spiller describes the African American body as the primary text and recurrent subject of oppression, with the marks of torture understood intergenerationally as a sort of

‘hieroglyphics of the flesh . . . hidden from the cultural seeing by skin colour.’<sup>29</sup> The compelling distinction she makes between ‘body’ and ‘flesh’ as indicative of ‘captive and liberated subject-positions,’<sup>30</sup> is maintained in Blake’s image, whose focus on violence provides a disturbing indicator of the implication of artist and viewer in the disarticulation of the body of its female subject through its provocative engagement with the ethical as well as aesthetic temper of the sublime. Without question, the illustration is subversive of racial discourses that would strip the captive body of any coefficient of humanity, including the intimate realities of suffering. But it also, for all its cargo of liberal compassion, inevitably consigns its unnamed subject to the chattel record, under the sign of race, as one of many - a ‘Female Samboe Slave.’ Its subsequent performance as an item of record therefore endorses not just its own present political intent but its future place in the historical archive. As the object of Stedman’s and Blake’s creative assembly of an evidentiary record, the ‘Flagellation’ is witness to a scene and an act, not to the personhood of an individual.

Equally controversially, Blake’s visualization foreshadows Frederick Douglass’ later narrative codification of the primal scene to which as a child he is hidden witness: the scourging of the young and beautiful Hester by their white master. This initiation into slavery, the symbolic passage through what Douglass calls ‘the bloodstained gate’, is what Saidiya Hartman describes as ‘the inaugural moment in the formation of the enslaved.’<sup>31</sup> For Hartman, the ‘terrible spectacle’ of sexually motivated and legislatively underwritten racial violence ‘dramatises the origin of the subject and demonstrates that to be a slave is to be under the brutal . . . authority of another’.<sup>32</sup> For Douglass, and subsequently for all enslaved persons for whom this scene is extrapolated as an originary narrative, subjectivity and subjection are therefore inevitably and inextricably bound together at the moment of their co-emergence. The originary narrative of subjectivity as Hartman reads it therefore confirms the visual context of black women’s bodies as sites of encrypted, readable, heritable subjection.

This heritability of [the knowledge of] subjection presents particular challenges to any attempt to produce aesthetic forms that draw, as Douglass subsequently does, on the chattel record as a sourcebook for the expression of political and artistic radicalism. In a theoretical spur from Hartman's work, however, Fred Moten moves deliberately away from the primacy of spectacle, questioning whether the link between subjectivity, spectatorship and racial violence provides the only possibility for ontological or performative expression. He points to the inherent radicalism of black aesthetic traditions, to a 'history of blackness [that is] . . . testament to the fact that objects can and do resist'.<sup>33</sup> His insights draw specifically on the resistant/ing nature of the sound object – the non-musical, non-linguistic articulation that is Hester's scream. That sound object, which emerges from but is supplementary to the body that produced it, allows this narrative incident, which ties the emergence of subjectivity to the witness of subjection, equally to constitute what he calls a 'scene of objection', one 'simultaneously [marked by] both the performance of the object and the performance of humanity'.<sup>34</sup> I would like to suggest the tractability of this formulation of the radical aesthetics of black performance as functioning within while simultaneously exceeding economies of subjection in the visual as well as oral/aural domain as a means to explore the possibility that the co-existence of archival visualisations, such as Blake's, may allow for a reading of Corzor's nude and the gothicised landscape she inhabits as a contemporary moment of aesthetic objection, as a scene in which the body performs the emancipation of the artefact in and as part of the process of creating the art object.

How then can we unpick the contradictory coincidence of aesthetic, archival and liberatory processes stemming from slavery and the apparent inextricability of ontologies of subjection from post-slavery systems of representation? In *Southern Gate* the female figure, positioned in front of the iron gate of the title is, like her sister predecessor, overtly staged within the economy of hypervisibility. Dark clouds obscure the sky behind her, as if a storm were

gathering, and the sunflowers in her hair and the small bird perched on her shoulder provide a stark contrast to the otherwise bleak setting. Her back to the crumbling portico, she faces away from rather than into a past whose neoclassical architectural vestiges confirm an investment in civilizational models whose political failures and history of internecine conflict find expression in the ruined facade - the Southern architecture of white memory. This displacement of the classical into the terrain of the gothic with its moral destabilisations and psychological ruptures, points to the complications of imperial diaspora, to the systems of cultural inauthenticity produced by the imposition of aesthetic parameters out of kilter with and fading from the world whose material and symbolic union/integrity they are called upon to express. In stark contrast to the diminished dystopian landscape, the subject of the image is wholly present. Hips swathed in a cloth of red, white and [possibly] blue that evokes the celebratory banners of the French Republic and of Union victory, this cursory covering of the pelvis also retraces itself onto the residual image of the bloodied rag of Blake's illustration.<sup>35</sup> As the contemporary artefact of Southern history, playing on the subtle dynamics of race and visibility, the female figure captures the significance of the postbellum century with iconic clarity. Contradictorily read as a celebration of freedom and as a symbolic representation of abandonment, most immediately she reflects the historical, economic and geographical tensions attending the 'devastating consequences of the shift to the urban north from the rural south'<sup>36</sup> that characterised the experience of the Great Migration for many African Americans left behind. Yet in the aftermath of a war against genocide and totalitarianism in Europe, the gothic grammar of the painting also serves to underline, through territorial contextualisation, the strangeness of the conflict abroad as one of several other possible overdeterminations that attend the image: summoning the shadow of the plantation, the camp, the cemetery, the museum, the gate of no return. If the earlier illustration imaged the material ways in which representations of oppression intersect with a history of terror as it is encrypted

onto the captive body, in ways complicit with the ways in which culture consigns that body to the chattel record, Cortor's nude, expressing plenty of assertive sexuality but nothing of the pornographic, testifies to the possibility that evidence may be recalled in forms of aesthetic practice that produce a space for subsequent archival performances present in and disruptive of the originary scene. Although impugned as one of several artist of the period whose work 'echoes many of the stereotypes observed in white artists', Cortor, working in unprecedented ways with a representation of the human form – the black female nude - whose racial otherness, in Farringdon's words, 'compounds the issues of gender normally associated with the nude form', <sup>37</sup> *Southern Gate*'s rebuttal of the aesthetic ideologies of Blake's image draws attention to both creative undertakings as an inescapably political acts, and to the records that emerge from them as anything but natural, organic, innocent residues of disinterested historical transactions.

In addition to its provocative symbolism with its implicit commentary on the ways in which images of the African American subject are prefigured in or by the chattel record, compositionally the piece tilts towards an explicit contemplation of the relationship between subject matter and aesthetic form. "As a Negro artist I have been particularly concerned with painting Negro racial types not only as such but in connection with particular problems in color, design and composition," Cortor himself declared.<sup>38</sup> Compositionally, the scale of figure recalls the heroic representations of labour that characterised the social realism of the previous decade, during which Cortor, employed in the Federal Art Project, drew genre scenes of the South Side of Chicago that emphasised the lives of the poor and working classes. In this painting, however, the heroic scale occurs in conjunction with non-realist stylizations that include the elongation of the figure, and a modelling of the roundness of the torso and limbs that emphasises solidity and volume, or the object's irrefutable presence in space. At the same time, the scale carries overtones of the surreal or fantastic, of a figurative presence that exceeds the limits of the rational. As such the work aligns itself less with the

conventions of social realism than with those of West African sculptural forms. As part of his studies at the Art Institute of Chicago in the late 1930s and early 1940s, Cortor was introduced to the African sculptures at the Field Museum, an encounter he credits with transforming his aesthetic: “that was the most important influence in all my work”, he claimed, “for to this day you will find in my handling of the human figure that cylindrical and lyrical quality I was taught to appreciate in African art.”<sup>39</sup> The Field Museum, founded as an outgrowth of the Columbian World’s Fair in the city in 1893, emphasized the scientific interest of its exhibits in ways characteristic of nineteenth and early twentieth-century museum collecting practices more generally. Cortor’s identification of the museum’s value as an aesthetic resource provides a specific instance of the aesthetic opportunities provided by legacies of imperial acquisition and their self-conscious archival production to afromodernism in particular. Drawing on a repository of African artefacts whose archival position lends itself to the contemporary performance of the recall and reconstitution of the diasporan archive, Cortor’s translation of the lessons of African sculpture into his treatment of the human form onto canvas involves the recognition and ritualization of the ethnographic object in aesthetic space.<sup>40</sup> *Southern Gate* recovers the ethnographically circumscribed ‘trophies’ of an earlier era as artefactual counters to inherited visual orders of subjection in a revisionary image that provides symbolic cohesion to the relationship between African art, the chattel record, and, most significantly, the centrality of the human body to any expression of an aesthetic of emancipation.

For although the grammar of the painting gestures towards the artist’s interest in sculptural forms, and a rejection of the prefiguration of subjection that allows his work to be read as a direct intervention in the chattel record, in its making *Southern Gate* also drew on more conventional ethnographic encounters with human subjects as characterized the times.<sup>41</sup> A Guggenheim grant in the 1940s took him on an exploratory journey across the South to St Helena’s Island,

one of the Sea Islands off the coast of Georgia and the Carolinas. The Sea Islands had also been the site of the famous ‘Port Royal Experiment’ during the American Civil War, which after the islands’ emancipation by Union forces, allowed free African Americans to work the land abandoned by the white plantocracy, producing a brief but significant utopian period of self-sufficiency until Andrew Johnson returned it to its previous white owners in 1865.<sup>42</sup> On St Helena’s Cortor encountered Gullah Creole culture, which retained distinctive African cultural traits and was little exposed to mainstream American culture. In anthropological terms it provided the uncanny coincidence of the familiar and the alienating, a prime example of the asymmetries of modernity and a lost history of utopian possibility. The study drawings of Gullah women Cortor made on St Helena’s provided some of the inspiration for *Southern Gate*, suggesting a further instance of archival routing that supplements the immediate context of the represented body. Drawn from life, spurning the prescriptive ontologies of historical subjection premised in the official archive, and given monumental expression through a sculptural vocabulary whose Africanist terms precede and supercede slavery’s violent inscriptions of human subjection, Cortor’s monumental nude is materially presenced through a process of intra-diasporic synthesis and artistic recognition with dual reference points in African sculpture and the diasporan body, both of which carry archival and aesthetic functions in the performance of blackness.<sup>43</sup>

In this image of the female form, therefore, precedent fictions of mastery and subjection are subject to a radical breakdown through intricate plays on archival performance and aesthetic formalism that draws on and later supplements the visual catalogue of the shadow archive. Fusing historical consciousness, anthropological encounter and aesthetic recovery, the painting stages the artist’s search in the human and cultural archive for forms and subjects capable of collaboratively restaging the chattel record’s recurrent production of objection and dissent. The ambivalence of the framing, the disjunctures of nature

and modernity, symbolic overlays and the lack of an active viewing engagement between sitter/subject and artist/observer might otherwise, in the absence of any archival play, compel a reading of the female figure as without subjectivity or representative agency. But the painting's multiple reference points in African sculpture – the art object that precedes enslavement - and the African American body - the artefact of slavery - both carry archival and aesthetic functions that prevent any thematic reduction that would cast the work as an object of ethnographic fantasy situated within a wider frame of sexual appraisal and patriarchal authority. Instead it frames the complexity of blackness as a lived experience, historical burden and radical aesthetic as part of this visual performance the body as a contemporary scene of objection.

Formally distinguishing itself from contemporaneous representations of women as social subjects exotic objects, or the furnishings of pastoral or paternalist fantasy, Cortor's nude heralds a significant shift in the relationship between the shadow archive and the landscape of the political present. Emphasising how the visual representation of African American women as subjects, objects and artefacts inflects the cultural frames in which the intra-diasporic archive takes shape, it enters into transhistorical dialogue with other archives and differently mobilised artistic frameworks. In doing so it revolutionizes the relationship between the African American subject and the act and art of modern portraiture. Moving away from any role in the invention of character through collaborative interactions between artist and sitter designed to produce a desired model of subjectivity as an aesthetic and subsequently archived event, a process Harry Berger describes as the 'fiction of the pose'<sup>44</sup> instead it produces the irrevocable integrity of its human subject by re-designating it an art object.



Equally radical strains of diasporan aesthetics are in evidence across the transnational archive but this afromodernist work demonstrates a symbolic investment in the female form as a means of channelling a revisionist aesthetic of objection that actively re-mediate the gothic presence of enslavement in the chattel record, an archival underworld to which the aesthetic of emancipation and the struggles of reconstruction are inevitably anchored. If Douglass, inadvertently or otherwise, emphasized the manliness of that archive, Cortor's visualization of the female body positions it as an active site where aesthetic power and social power are negotiated. As such, he provides an example of black diasporan art as a form of archival practice, drawing on artefactual repositories and ethnographic spaces for which that art subsequently provides an ever-expanding archival resource. By sanctioning a new investment in the symbolic and formal possibilities of the body as a sight and site of objection, it points to the always-available possibility of archival interpretation, of the interwoven materialities of the Afro-diasporan subject as a body of evidence waiting to be accessed, a means of envisioning a range of possible futures as yet incompletely imagined.

## Notes:

---

<sup>1</sup> Alain Locke, 'A Note on African Art', *Opportunity* 2 (May 1924): pp.134-38, p.134.

<sup>2</sup> In Henry Louis Gates and Jean Andrew Jarrett eds, *The New Negro: Readings on Race, Representation and African American Culture, 1892-1938*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007), pp 546-47, p. 546.

<sup>3</sup> Frederick Douglass, *The Heroic Slave*, from *Autographs for Freedom*, ed Julia Griffiths, (Boston: Jewett and Company, 1853), pp. 174-293, p. 175.

<sup>4</sup> "The Novelization of Voice in Early African American Narrative" *PMLA* 105 (January 1990): 23-34.

<sup>5</sup> José de Piérola. "At the Edge of History: Notes for a Theory for the Historical Novel in Latin America." *Romance Studies* 26.2 (2008): pp. 151-62, p. 155.

<sup>6</sup> See F Sweeney, 'Visual Culture and Fictive Technique in Frederick Douglass', *The Heroic Slave*, *Slavery & Abolition* 33.2 (2012): pp. 305-320.

<sup>7</sup> Douglass, p. 175.

- 
- <sup>8</sup> Pierre Nora, 'Between memory and History: *Les Lieux de Memoire*', in *History and Memory in African American Culture*, Genevieve Fabre and Robert O Meally eds, (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), pp. 284-300, p. 284.
- <sup>9</sup> Debra Willis and Barbara Krautham, *Envisaging Emancipation. African Americans and the End of Slavery*, (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2013), p. 11.
- <sup>10</sup> Joan Schwartz and Terry Cooke, 'Archives, Records and Power: The Making of Modern Memory', *Archival Science* 2 (2002): pp. 1-19, p. 10.
- <sup>11</sup> Leigh Raiford, 'Ida B Wells and the Shadow Archive', in *Pictures and Progress: Early Photography and the Making of African American Identity*, Maurice o Wallace and Shawn Michelle Smith eds, (Durham: Duke University Press, 2012), pp. 299-320.
- <sup>12</sup> Jacques Derrida and Eric Prenowitz, 'Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression', *Diacritics* 25.2 (1995): pp. 9-63, p. 10.
- <sup>13</sup> Celeste-Marie Bernier, *Characters of Blood: Black Heroism in the Transatlantic Imagination*, (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2012), pp. xiii-iv.
- <sup>14</sup> Jeremy Braddock, *Collecting as Modernist Practice*, (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2013), pp.156-94.
- <sup>15</sup> Countee Cullen's much anthologized 'Heritage', with its rhetorical 'What is Africa to me:' the question that is not a question, first appearing in the New Negro Anthology, provides what is perhaps the best known literary example. For a discussion of Locke's influence, and that of his African art collection on promoting an interest in Africanism in the visual arts, Aaron Douglas' work in particular, see Amy Helene Kirschke, *Aaron Douglas: Art, Race and the Harlem Renaissance*, (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1995), pp.125-6.
- <sup>16</sup> Locke's extraordinary African art collection, now preserved and exhibited by Howard University, provides a sometimes unsettling sense of his profound interest in sculptural forms, ritual objects, fetishes and masks from across the continent. Equally notable are the ways in which his collecting practice seems to blur the boundaries between archival activity and artistic innovation, to generate a panafricanist vision that acknowledges the human and aesthetic diversity of diaspora, as well as the asymmetries of modernity and the ruptures of history, but seems less inclined to question the ways in that practice might reflect discrepancies in power relationships across diaspora, or result in desanctification as much as in renaissance.
- <sup>17</sup> See Brent Hayes Edwards, *The Practice of Diaspora: Literature, Translations and the Rise of Black Internationalism*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003).
- <sup>18</sup> See Ginger Hills's excellent 'Rightly Viewed': Theorizations of the Self in Frederick Douglass's Lecture on Pictures', in *Pictures and Progress: Early Photography and the Making of African American Identity*, Maurice o Wallace and Shawn Michelle Smith eds, (Durham: Duke University Press, 2012), pp. 41-81.
- <sup>19</sup> Gwendolyn Brooks 'Gay Chaps at the Bar', *Poetry*, November 1944, pp. 76-77, p. 76.
- <sup>20</sup> Caroline Brown, *The Black Female Body in American Literature and Art: Performing Identity*, (London: Routledge 2012), p. 4.
- <sup>21</sup> Negro Artists Win Top US Honors', *Life Magazine*, 22 July, 1946, pp. 62-66, p. 62. Unbylined.
- <sup>22</sup> *Life Magazine* p. 62.
- <sup>23</sup> *Life Magazine* p. 62.
- <sup>24</sup> Romare Bearden, Harry Brinton Henderson, *A History of African-American Artists: From 1792 to the Present*, (New York: Pantheon, 1993), p. 272.
- <sup>25</sup> Sharon F. Patton, *African-American Art*, (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), p164.
- <sup>26</sup> The few other available examples in African-American painting include Archibald Motley Jr, *Brown Girl after a Bath*', oil on canvas, 1931, William Johnson's female nudes from

1940, including *Three Dancers*, which also draw on African sculptural forms, though they emphasize presence through a flattening of the figure rather than through volumetric illusion, and the work of Frederick D Jones. See Murry K DePillars, 'Chicago's African American visual Arts Renaissance,' in *The Black Chicago Renaissance*. ed Darlene Clark Hine, John McCluskey. (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2012), pp.165-96. P. 183, 187; and West, Sandra L. "Cortor, Eldzier." In Aberjhani, and Sandra L. West. *Encyclopedia of the Harlem Renaissance*. New York: Facts On File, Inc., 2003. *African-American History Online*. Facts On File

Inc. <http://www.fofweb.com/activelink2.asp?ItemID=WE01&iPin=EHR0080&SingleRecord=True> (accessed August 14, 2014). See also Debra Willis and Carla Peterson's seminal work on the photographic image, *The Black Female Body: A Photographic History*, (Philadelphia, Temple University Press, 2002.)

<sup>27</sup> William Blake, *Flagellation of a Female Samboe Slave*. In John G Stedman, *Narrative of a Five Years Expedition Against the Revolted Slaves of Surinam, Volume 1*. (London: J Johnson and J Edwards, 1796,) p. 326. The image is available here:

<http://digitalprojects.libraries.uc.edu:8180/luna/servlet/detail/JCB~1~1~658~550002:Flagellation-of-a-Female-Samboe-Sla#> Accessed 11 August, 2014.

<sup>28</sup> Mario Klarer, 'Humanitarian Pornography: John Gabriel Stedman's "Narrative of a Five Years Expedition against the Revolted Negroes of Surinam" (1796)', *New Literary History* 36. 4 (2005): pp. 559-87, pp.560-1. For a discussion of the related literary uses of sentiment and terror see Emily Senior, "Perfectly Whole": Skin and Text in John Gabriel Stedman's *Narrative of a Five Years Expedition against the Revolted Negroes of Surinam*, *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 44. 1 (2010): pp. 39-56.

<sup>29</sup> Hortense J Spillers Mam's baby, Papa's Maybe: An American Grammar Book, *Diacritics*, 17. 2, (1987): pp. 64-81, p. 67.

<sup>30</sup> Spillers 67.

<sup>31</sup> Saidiya Hartman, *Scenes of Subjection: Terror, Slavery and Self-Marking in Nineteenth-century America*, (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), p. 4.

<sup>32</sup> Hartman pp. 4-5.

<sup>33</sup> Fred Moten, *In the Break: The Aesthetics of the Black Radical Tradition*, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003), pp. 2-3.

<sup>34</sup> Moten p. 4.

<sup>35</sup> Another precursor image from the chattel records may be provided by Marie Guillemine Benoist's *Portrait d'une negresse*, 1800.

<sup>36</sup> 'African American Artists in the Twentieth Century,' Oxford African American Studies Center, (online resource):

[http://www.oxfordaasc.com/public/features/archive/1106/photo\\_essay.jsp?page=6](http://www.oxfordaasc.com/public/features/archive/1106/photo_essay.jsp?page=6), accessed 11 August, 2014; Joseph Jacobs, *Since the Harlem Renaissance: 50 years of Afro-American Art*, (Lewisburg, Centre Gallery, Bucknell University Press, 1985), p. 80.

<sup>37</sup> Lisa E. Farrington, 'Reinventing Herself: The Black Female Nude,' *Woman's Art Journal*, 24. 2 (2003-2004): pp. 15-23, p. 22.

<sup>38</sup> The artist, quoted in the Eldzier Cortor Papers, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution Series 5: Writings, 1999-2006, box1, Folder 35, Questionnaire, undated.

<sup>39</sup> Elton C Fax, *Seventeen Black Artists*, (New York: Dodd Mead, 1971), p87.

<sup>40</sup> The Field Museum was established as an outgrowth of the World's Columbian Exposition held in Chicago in 1893, at which Frederick Douglass represented the Haitian Pavilion and

---

which prompted Ida B Wells' pamphlet, "The Reason Why the Colored American is not in the World's Columbian Exposition."

<sup>41</sup> The ethnographic aesthetic found expression in the work of Roland Barthe, Zora Neale Hurston and Katherine Dunham amongst others.

<sup>42</sup> See Willie Lee Nichols Rose, *Rehearsal for Reconstruction: The Port Royal experiment*, (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1999).

<sup>43</sup> The encounter with Gullah culture also forms the basis of many of Cortor's most celebrated paintings, including *Day Clean*, *Room No. 5* and *Sea of Time*.

<sup>44</sup> Harry Berger, 'Fictions of the pose: Facing the gaze of Early Modern Portraiture', *Representations* 46 (1994) pp. 87-120, p. 90.